

**World Affairs Council of the Florida Palm Beaches
Palm Beach County Convention Center
West Palm Beach, Florida
March 24, 2011, 6:30 p.m.**

2011 - Year of Change, Year of Decisions

**Iraq's Future and the Struggle for Democratic Rights in the Kurdistan
Region**

Good evening. Let me wish you all a Happy Newroz, the start of a new year for Kurds and many others. Like all things spring, it is a time of new beginning and new hope – something that is always good to embrace. So I wish all of you good fortune, health and joy in this next year.

It is a pleasure to be here. Florida is a place that feels extremely close to me and many other Kurds. The University of Central Florida, in Orlando, is the home of the first ever chair in Kurdish studies – an honor that has been thrilling to me and all Kurds since it was inaugurated a few years ago. Florida is also special since Tampa is the home of Central Command. They are also our good friends; like many of you here, they care deeply about the Kurds and our shared values and shared dreams. So we Kurds look to Florida as a particularly heartfelt place.

I would like to thank the World Affairs Council of the Florida Palm Beaches for inviting me to join you this evening. I would like to give a special thanks to Mr. William Martin, whose hospitality and hard work made this visit so enticing and enjoyable for myself and my family, and for ensuring we all have the chance to relax and exchange thoughts.

Over these next hours, as we meet to share thoughts and questions, it is quite likely that another long-standing pillar of government may begin to wobble in the Middle East.

Perhaps, by the time we have completed our questions and discussion, that pillar may have fallen. For as we meet today, the Middle East is experiencing a political dynamic unlike any in its history, since perhaps the first great wave of Islam swept over the region. Every time some of us think, "Well, that's it for now"—something more happens.

These are true moments in the march of history that will affect those of us who live in that neighborhood and those of you who care about our neighborhood. We all must watch, learn and act wisely.

The face of the Middle East today is dramatically changed from when you issued your kind invitation to me to speak.

We can list the names where the changes are coursing through the societies: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, even – sometime – Iran.

While seeing and hearing the rising expectations of people throughout these Middle East nations, and while many may rejoice in the seemingly liberation of many who have been oppressed, we must also be cautious in viewing the events as a whole.

The Middle East is first and foremost a geographic region, full of different societies and different cultures and histories; what works well in one area does not always work well in another.

Tunisia is far different than Yemen, for example. And the well-educated society in Egypt strikes a different chord than those in neighboring Libya.

Each group seeks what it wants and it will achieve those in different ways. The pace of the changes must be in temperate with each society to prevent change from becoming chaos and calamity.

From Libya to Bahrain, Arab leaders are challenged by a new kind of movement: leaderless, mostly young people, who share many of the same demands.

Arab leaders have responded with familiar tactics — from offering concessions to sending in the military.

They face, however, a voice that is emboldened and empowered through new technologies that in past decades did not exist.

Abbie Hoffman once noted “democracy is not something you believe in or a place to hang your hat, but it’s something you do. You participate. If you stop doing it, democracy crumbles.”

Today, as those citizens in the Middle East do what democracy calls for, it is the walls of oppression that now crumble.

Students armed with cell phones and cameras are now finding common cause with soldiers who are conscripts and have the same grievances as those in the street.

Of course, in the middle – in many ways – are Iraq and the Kurdistan region, two political entities where the modern ideals of civilian control of the government, including the military, are being planted.

While not immune from the wave of unrest that has gripped the Middle East, we have long seen our region of Iraq as the strongest likelihood for democracy to flourish in the Middle East. Importantly – and somewhat proudly – the protests that have flared in Iraq and the Kurdistan region have been formed primarily by calls for better services and for the keeping of campaign promises; few are calling for the trampling of the seeds of democracy we – with America's help – have planted in our soil.

Iraq's future and the struggle for democratic rights in the Kurdistan Region is one of the crossroads for the Middle East and the United States on how the region will fare with democracy and all the positive attributes that flow from a true representative government.

Since the initial no-fly zone was established after the 1991 Gulf War, to the final liberation, the Kurdistan region has led the way in nurturing and expanding the democratic, civilian rule government that our people seek.

Our people have embraced it fully and strongly and, while we are not perfect, we are on the path to a more transparent democracy.

While many call us an example, we are not a template – and we are still fragile in many ways.

So what will happen now in Iraq; where we are even seeing some protests against the lack of civilian services?

That question is key both for us in Kurdistan and you in the United States.

In a region where freefall and fluid change now seems to be the script for the near future, where a new landscape will call for a new roadmap, the stability of the Kurdistan region and Iraq will be a lynchpin to U.S. influence and the continued growth of democracy, from Morocco to Iran.

After a long period of political gridlock, a new government is taking hold in Iraq as internal dynamics reflect increased security and increased demands from the population.

What will continue to be the U.S. interest in Iraq and how will other regional dynamics influence and be affected by the policies of the new Iraqi government?

What are U.S. national security interests in Iraq? 2011 looms to be a year of change in the region, and the time for forward-looking decisions.

The answers to these questions may mean the difference between a strong American influence in the Middle East or a fire sale of the investment of democracy that the United States has paid for with its lives and treasure.

President Bush and President Obama both have said they believe democracy can take hold and grow in the Middle East.

They are correct – and it already has, with us, thanks in large part to the United States.

Now we are seeing those seeds spread elsewhere in the region. Will they take root as well? Or will the weeds of oppression choke them?

This is indeed very important for America, for as Iraq goes, so goes the Middle East and the shape of the U.S. involvement in our part of the world.

There are very few times you can see a DIRECT RESULT of your efforts. We are that clear, unequivocal direct result of U.S. democratic efforts. But we have a ways to go.

Now that things are changing vis-à-vis America's role in Iraq and the Kurdistan region, it is crucial for Americans to realize that our success is your success – and that elusive light at the end of the tunnel is getting closer.

We do not want that light go out. Thus, we still need your support. And now that light can be the beacon for others in the Middle East, seeking democracy and progressiveness.

We are delighted that we in the Kurdistan Region have done our part to help move all of Iraq forward. We are committed to that task - to making a federal, democratic Iraq a shining example for the world.

It was our leaders' initiatives that brought bickering Iraqi parties together to eventually form the government.

Now, of course, comes one of those benchmark moments – we are nearing the end date of the SOFA between Iraq and the U.S. President Obama has called it “turning the page.”

It is a keen observation of this moment as to what is happening in Iraq, as in every story, one must turn the page to continue.

Crucially, however, IT IS vital to remember that turning the page is not the same as writing the next chapter. All of us in the Kurdistan Region know **HOW** we want this story to end.

What concerns us is who the main characters are going to be, what those story elements are and, of course, if the story will unfold to the end in the way we wish.

America must not leave the Middle East. Its troops can be reduced, but it must always be there – in its spirit, in its history of tolerance and democracy, in its support for those oppressed.

It must share its students and teachers, its diplomats, its liberties and love for life, its optimism and its perseverance.

Its words must be smart and strong and its actions must be in concert with those universal goals that all freedom loving people embrace.

It is worth reminding Americans and our friends in the White House and Congress of where we are today.

Today we in the Kurdistan Region are the strongest friend and ally the United States has in our part of the world.

Our home is the place with the most progressive press law in the region, the place with a higher percentage of women in our legislature than most of the nations in the world, the place where Christians and others fleeing religious persecution from elsewhere in Iraq come to find sanctuary and a future.

The Kurdistan region is the place where those seeking to invest – from some of our newest friends like the Koreans to neighbors like Turkey – find our new economy vibrant, promising and full of opportunity.

And we are just outside your door. So if my words motivate you, tomorrow morning you can board U.S. Airways flight #1894 that, after one quick connection, will land you in Frankfurt, Germany. You can board a Lufthansa flight non-stop to Erbil, the capital off the Kurdistan Region. By tomorrow night, you will be in my homeland enjoying a savory kebab and having an amazingly tasty tea. You will see a bustling economy, an energized and happy people and as well as something very rare in our part of the world – laughing children skipping to school.

Yes you really can. And I urge you to do it !

So again, I am glad you invited me today. We need you – the United States -- to remain interested in Kurdistan and in Iraq. It has been the United States who has led the way in protecting us and believing in us.

The Kurdistan Region is bound to America like few others. Kurdish hopes for autonomy -- after a history of being the victims of ethnic cleansing and mass slaughter - - first became a precarious reality when President George H.W. Bush, Prime Minister Major and French President Mitterrand instituted the northern no-fly zone over Iraq in 1991, three years after Saddam Hussein's Anfal campaign wiped out up to 200,000 Kurds.

With American protection in place, the Kurds began building infrastructure and honing their political vision.

We had our fits and starts, our internal fighting, and our political difficulties. We still have some.

But today, we are a tangible and relative success for the United States. We are your natural friends and your unshakable allies.

We are deeply grateful for your toil, tears, blood and treasure spent on our behalf.

There are no statues to American liberators in Kurdistan or streets named after your presidents.

Perhaps those will come. What there is today, in the eyes of every Kurd, in the bazaars of our large cities, in the tea shops of our villages and along the trails of our mountain shepherds, are the faces of gratitude for what you did for us.

As the sands shift throughout the Middle East, there is some bedrock for America to place its feet: Iraqi Kurdistan.

Together, we can help build that place where others see democracy can work and they can emulate in the ways best suited for their nations at this moment.

Our story from the Kurdistan Region has been uplifting. We understand that greater political, democratic and economic reforms are necessary, and we are working on them, but we are on a right path.

As I said earlier, we also have seen demonstrations on our streets. Sadly, extremists on both sides have done what extremists throughout history have done: seized the opportunity to ferment tragedy from the good intentions of concerned citizens.

Thankfully, leaders of those in government and those demanding improved services realize the folly of letting those who care not for democracy to shape the steps we shall take together.

Meanwhile, we in government have taken beginning steps to tackle some of the larger issues of concern:

We are working with PriceWaterHouse Coopers to implement a good governance and transparency initiative that roots out corruption and improves our standard of governance.

As part of that, as part of his Newroz message, President Barzani announced a new comprehensive reform program that would both fight corruption and improve government services. The impact of these news steps could be felt as soon as three months.

We are working with RAND Corporation to implement a civil servant reform process, aimed at downsizing our over-bloated government and strengthening the private sector.

We are investing in our future by launching the ambitious Human Capacity Building Development Program where our government has appropriated \$100M for students to study abroad for masters degrees and doctorates

We are positioning our Region as a major potential energy source for Iraq, and possibly Europe.

With our abundant natural Gas, we aim to add to the 1700MW of electricity we currently produce in Kurdistan another 5000MW. That would be enough to power other key cities in Iraq beyond Kurdistan. Our aim is to be a principle supplier of gas to the Nabucco pipeline project; which will strategically supply Europe with alternative sources of energy.

We are finally beginning to realize our potential, as a major political and economic power within Iraq, but more importantly beyond Iraq's boundaries.

The U.S. military is leaving, but the stability that will define the U.S. success in Iraq cannot and must not leave.

That is why we were thrilled when U.S. officials announced they plan to open a diplomatic consulate in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region, and in Basra.

We see this decision as one in a series of steps by the United States to honor the pledges of President Obama and others for renewed and continued support to the Kurdistan Region as part of its desire to ensure that stability stays in Iraq.

There remain tough internal issues that we Iraqis must work out – revenue sharing and hydrocarbons law, and resolving the status of the disputed territories as well as implementing federalism per the constitution of Iraq.

Solving these issues is a great priority to our friends in the United States. But solving these issues is even a greater priority to us.

Congress and the Obama administration should reflect on just how important this is for all of Iraq and the region and avoid actions – intentional or otherwise – that would impede or diminish this laudable progress.

We must work to build democratic institutions throughout Iraq, and set the tone, example and challenge for our brothers and sisters who have not yet been able to take those first steps. This is indeed a goal that deserves all of our hearts and souls.

The esteemed American journalist, Bill Moyers, wrote in 2007, that "Democracy works when people claim it as their own." We in Kurdistan have staked our claim. But stakes remain high this year.

With American guidance and support, Iraq can show how those in a democracy can overcome entrenched political differences and move forward to the next level of democratic rule. In doing so, we honor what the United States gave us and show our neighbors that indeed, there is a better way.

Thank you very much. I look forward to any questions.

END END END

Kurdistan

INVEST IN DEMOCRACY
2011



An official publication of the
Kurdistan Regional Government

**Elliott School of International Affairs
1957 E Street, N.W.
City View Room
Washington, D.C.
June 7, 2011, 12:30 p.m.**

**The Arab Summer and the U.S. role in helping the Middle East and Iraq
continue to move forward**

Good afternoon and thank you for having me here.

The calendar will soon officially say summer but in the Middle East, time is moving much more quickly. The heady days of the Arab spring have now moved into the hot, uncertain days of summer. That will be followed quickly by what looks now to be the autumn of the U.S. presence in Iraq. Both of these seasons, much like that of the spring we just experienced, are linked together in providing the signals of how peace, stability and democratic progress may proceed in the Middle East.

This is, of course, important to Kurds as much as it is for Americans. As many of our neighbors attempt to sort out and structure the political upheavals they experienced earlier this year, the political tremors continue to shake the ground all through our region. Just this weekend the president of Yemen left his country, an area that is of

prime concern to Americans because of its use by many of the some of the most dangerous terrorist elements. And few expect that to be the last place where the voice of the people becomes loud enough to be heard and to find results.

These are true moments in the march of history that will affect those of us who live in that neighborhood and those of you who care about our neighborhood. This is one of them. We all must watch, learn and act wisely.

And of course, these changes are playing out against the calendar that calls for most of U.S. forces to be out of Iraq by the end of the year. We hope, of course, that the U.S. presence will continue, with a ramped up diplomatic effort to continue the strong work of the U.S. military in helping all of us in Iraq learn the basics of democracy.

While not immune from the wave of unrest that has gripped the Middle East, we in the Kurdistan region have long seen our region of home in Iraq as the strongest likelihood for democracy to flourish in the Middle East. Importantly – and somewhat proudly – the protests that have flared in Iraq and the Kurdistan region have been formed primarily by calls for better services and for the keeping of campaign promises; few are calling for the trampling of the seeds of democracy that we – with America's help – have planted in our soil.

Iraq's future and the struggle for democratic rights in the Kurdistan Region is one of the crossroads for the Middle East and the United States on how the region will fare with democracy and all the positive attributes that flow from a true representative government.

It is also important, and anxious, for others in the region, including mutual friends such as Turkey.

Since the initial no-fly zone was established after the 1991 Gulf War, to the final liberation, the Kurdistan region has led the way in nurturing and expanding the democratic, civilian rule government that our people seek – helped enormously by the United States and the many Americans who cared about us.

Our people have embraced it fully and strongly and, while we are not perfect, we are on the path to a more transparent democracy.

While many call us an example, we are not a template – and we are still fragile in many ways.

So what will happen now in Iraq; where we are even seeing some protests against the lack of civilian services?

That question is key both for us in Kurdistan and you in the United States.

In a region where freefall and fluid change now seems to be the script for the near future, where a new landscape will call for a new roadmap, the stability of the Kurdistan region and Iraq will be a lynchpin to U.S. influence and the continued growth of democracy, from Morocco to Iran.

For those of you who have served in the region, or see a future moment of time in the Middle East, I implore you to think deeply on what the role of the United States can be in keeping alive the dreams of democracy and the freedom so long denied Iraqis and others.

There is no substitute for American leadership. America is the indispensable nation. That is what makes your nation exceptional.

That exceptional spirit comes from many things, but a key – I believe – is that America is a nation of immigrants from every corner of the earth. It thus is not bound not by ancestral blood but by revolutionary ideas and universal beliefs brilliantly articulated more than two centuries ago in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Documents and ideas that come from the spirit of what all men and women should be, ideas that have been embraced all around the world.

The founding of the United States ushered in the modern democratic experiment, along with new concepts of freedom and human rights. In the 20th century, your Greatest Generation fought for the survival of that experiment against its totalitarian enemies, Nazi, Fascist, and Communist alike. Today, the challenges posed by Islamic totalitarianism test a new generation.

So today, in Iraq and elsewhere, we see this Democratic Determination of America again guiding and working toward those universal goals. Like your other efforts through history, it is worth the investment.

After a long period of political gridlock, a new government is taking hold in Iraq as internal dynamics reflect increased security and increased demands from the population. The American experiment of 1776 continues.

So we should all think about these issues:

- What will continue to be the U.S. interest in Iraq and how will other regional dynamics influence and be affected by the policies of the new Iraqi government?
- What are U.S. national security interests in Iraq? 2011 has already shown itself to be a year of change in the region, and the time is now for forward-looking decisions.
- How real are the democratic sprouts of this past spring and will they grow – or will they wither – in the heat of the Arab summer? How should the United States help tend these fragile democratic opportunities?

The answers to these questions may mean the difference between a strong American influence in the Middle East or a fire sale of the investment of democracy that the United States has paid for with its lives and treasure.

The Middle East is experiencing a political dynamic unlike any in its history, since perhaps the first great wave of Islam swept over the region. Every time some of us think, "Well, that's it for now" —something more happens.

President Bush and President Obama both have said they believe democracy can take hold and grow in the Middle East.

They are correct – and it already has, with us, thanks in large part to the United States.

Now we are seeing those seeds spread elsewhere in the region. Will they take root as well? Or will the weeds of oppression choke them?

This is indeed very important for America, for as Iraq goes, so goes the Middle East and the shape of the U.S. involvement in our part of the world.

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Now that things are changing vis-à-vis America's role in Iraq and the Kurdistan region, it is crucial for Americans to realize that our success is your success – and that elusive light at the end of the tunnel is getting closer.

We do not want that light go out. Thus, we still need your support. And now that light can be the beacon for others in the Middle East, seeking democracy and progressiveness.

We are delighted that we in the Kurdistan Region have done our part to help move all of Iraq forward. We are committed to that task - to making a federal, democratic Iraq a shining example for the world.

It was our leaders' initiatives that brought bickering Iraqi parties together to eventually form the government.

Now comes one of those benchmark moments – we are nearing the end date of the SOFA between Iraq and the U.S. President Obama has called it “turning the page.”

Quite frankly, America must not leave the Middle East. Its troops can be reduced, but it must always be there – in its spirit, in its history of tolerance and democracy, in its support for those oppressed.

It must share its students and teachers, its diplomats, its liberties and love for life, its optimism and its perseverance.

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It is where you will see a bustling economy, an energized and happy people and as well as something very rare in our part of the world – laughing children skipping to school.

The Kurdistan region is the place where those seeking to invest – from some of our newest friends like the Koreans to neighbors like Turkey – find our new economy vibrant, promising and full of opportunity.

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The Kurdistan Region is bound to America like few others. Kurdish hopes for autonomy -- after a history of being the victims of ethnic cleansing and mass slaughter - first became a precarious reality when President George H.W. Bush, Prime Minister Major and French President Mitterrand instituted the northern no-fly zone over Iraq in

1991, three years after Saddam Hussein's Anfal campaign wiped out up to 200,000

Kurds.

With American protection in place, the Kurds began building infrastructure and honing their political vision.

We had our fit and starts, our internal fighting, and our political difficulties. We still have some.

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We are deeply grateful for your toil, tears, blood and treasure spent on our behalf.

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Together, we can help build that place where others see democracy can work and they can emulate in the ways best suited for their nations at this moment.

Our story from the Kurdistan Region has been uplifting. We understand that greater political, democratic and economic reforms are necessary, and we are working on them, but we are on a right path.

As I said earlier, we also have seen demonstrations on our streets. Sadly, extremists on both sides have done what extremists throughout history have done: seized the opportunity to ferment tragedy from the good intentions of concerned citizens.

Thankfully, leaders of those in government and those demanding improved services realize the folly of letting those who care not for democracy to shape the steps we shall take together.

Meanwhile, we in government have taken beginning steps to tackle some of the larger issues of concern:

We are working with PriceWaterHouse Coopers to implement a good governance and transparency initiative that roots out corruption and improves our standard of governance.

Additionally, a new comprehensive reform program that will both fight corruption and improve government services is underway. The impact of these news steps could be felt as soon as the end of summer.

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We are investing in our future by launching the ambitious Human Capacity Building Development Program where our government has appropriated \$100M for students to study abroad for masters degrees and doctorates

We are positioning our Region as a major potential energy source for Iraq, and possibly Europe.

With our abundant natural Gas, we aim to add to the 1700MW of electricity we currently produce in Kurdistan another 5000MW. That would be enough to power other key cities in Iraq beyond Kurdistan. Our aim is to be a principle supplier of gas to the Nabucco pipeline project; which will strategically supply Europe with alternative sources of energy.

We are finally beginning to realize our potential, as a major political and economic power within Iraq, but more importantly beyond Iraq's boundaries.

The U.S. military is leaving, but the stability that will define the U.S. success in Iraq cannot and must not leave.

That is why we were thrilled when U.S. officials announced they plan to open a diplomatic consulate in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region, and in Basra.

We see this decision as one in a series of steps by the United States to honor the pledges of President Obama and others for renewed and continued support to the Kurdistan Region as part of its desire to ensure that stability stays in Iraq.

There remain tough internal issues that we Iraqis must work out – revenue sharing and hydrocarbons law, and resolving the status of the disputed territories as well as implementing federalism per the constitution of Iraq.

Solving these issues is a great priority to our friends in the United States. But solving these issues is even a greater priority to us.

Congress and the Obama administration should reflect on just how important this is for all of Iraq and the region and avoid actions – intentional or otherwise – that would impede or diminish this laudable progress.

We must work to build democratic institutions throughout Iraq, and set the tone, example and challenge for our brothers and sisters who have not yet been able to take those first steps. This is indeed a goal that deserves all of our hearts and souls.

The esteemed American journalist, Bill Moyers, wrote in 2007, that “Democracy works when people claim it as their own.” We in Kurdistan have staked our claim. But stakes remain high this year.

With American guidance and support, Iraq can show how those in a democracy can overcome entrenched political differences and move forward to the next level of

democratic rule. In doing so, we honor what the United States gave us and show our neighbors that indeed, there is a better way.

Thank you very much. I look forward to any questions.

END END END

2011 - Year of Change, Year of Decisions

**The Next Steps in Iraq's Political Evolution, the role of the
Kurds and U.S. national security interests in the Middle East**

Good afternoon. Thank you for having me here today.

Over this two-hour period, as we meet to share food and fellowship, it is quite likely that another long-standing pillar of government may begin to wobble in the Middle East.

Perhaps, by the time we have completed our questions and discussion, that pillar may have fallen. For as we meet today, the Middle East is experiencing a political dynamic unlike any in its history, since perhaps the first great wave of Islam swept over the region.

The face of the Middle East today is dramatically changed from when you issued your kind invitation to me to speak.

I had promised then that 2011 would be a year of change and a year of decisions . Events have lived up to the prophecy.

We can list the names where the changes are coursing through the societies: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan.

Then there are new rumblings from the voice of the people in Iran; where they were shuddered last year. And yesterday, the first protests in Morocco.

While seeing and hearing the rising expectations of people throughout these Middle East nations, and while many may rejoice in the seemingly liberation of many who have been oppressed, we must also be cautious in viewing the events as a whole.

The Middle East is first and foremost a geographic region, full of different societies and different cultures and histories; what works well in one area does not always work well in another.

Tunisia is far different than Yemen, for example. And the well-educated society in Egypt strikes a different chord than those in neighboring Libya.

Each group seeks what it wants and it will achieve those in different ways. The pace of the changes must be in temperate with each society to prevent change from becoming chaos and calamity.

From Libya to Bahrain, Arab leaders are challenged by a new kind of movement: leaderless, mostly young people, who share many of the same demands.

Arab leaders have responded with familiar tactics — from offering concessions to sending in the military.

They face, however, a voice that is emboldened and empowered through new technologies that in past decades did not exist.

Abbie Hoffman once noted “democracy is not something you believe in or a place to hang your hat, but it’s something you do. You participate. If you stop doing it, democracy crumbles.”

Today, as those citizens in the Middle East do what democracy calls for, it is the walls of oppression that now crumble.

Students armed with cell phones and cameras are now finding common cause with soldiers who are conscripts and have the same grievances as those in the street.

When soldiers in Tunisia and Egypt were ordered to fire, they refused to shoot. And when they did shoot in Bahrain, the government found its military sales from Britain and France cut off.

Of course, in the middle – in many ways – is Iraq and the Kurdistan region, two political entities where the modern ideals of civilian control of the government, including the military, are being planted.

While not immune from the wave of unrest that has gripped the Middle East, we have long seen our region of Iraq as the strongest likelihood for democracy to flourish in the Middle East.

Since the initial no-fly zone was established after the 1991 Gulf War, to the final liberation, the Kurdistan region has led the way in nurturing and expanding the democratic, civilian rule government that our people seek.

Our people have embraced it fully and strongly and, while we are not perfect, we are on the path to a more transparent democracy.

While many call us an example, we are not a template – and we are still fragile in many ways.

So what will happen now in Iraq; where we are even seeing some protests against the lack of civilian services?

That question is key both for us in Kurdistan and you in the United States.

In a region where freefall and fluid change now seems to be the script for the near future, where a new landscape will call for a new roadmap, the stability of the Kurdistan region and Iraq will be a lynchpin to U.S. influence and the continued growth of democracy, from Morocco to Iran.

After a long period of political gridlock, a new government is taking hold in Iraq as internal dynamics reflect increased security and increased demands from the population.

What will continue to be the U.S. interest in Iraq and how will other regional dynamics influence and be affected by the policies of the new Iraqi government?

What are U.S. national security interests in Iraq? 2011 looms to be a year of change in the region, and the time for forward-looking decisions.

The answers to these questions may mean the difference between a strong American influence in the Middle East or a fire sale of the

investment of democracy that the United States has paid for with its lives and treasure.

President Bush and President Obama both have said they believe democracy can take hold and grow in the Middle East.

They are correct – and it already has, with us, thanks in large part to the United States.

Now we are seeing those seeds spread elsewhere in the region. Will they take root as well? Or will the weeds of oppression choke them?

This is indeed very important for America, for as Iraq goes, so goes the Middle East and the shape of the U.S. involvement in our part of the world.

There are very few times you can see a DIRECT RESULT of your efforts. We are that clear, unequivocal direct result of U.S. democratic efforts. But we have a ways to go.

We have important issues to talk about this afternoon.

Especially now that things are changing vis-à-vis America's role in Iraq and the Kurdistan region, it is crucial for Americans to realize that our success is your success – and that elusive light at the end of the tunnel is getting closer.

We do not want that light go out. Thus, we still need your support. And now that light can be the beacon for others in the Middle East, seeking democracy and progressiveness.

We are delighted that we in the Kurdistan Region have done our part to help move all of Iraq forward. We are committed to that task - to making a federal, democratic Iraq a shining example for the world.

It was our leader's initiatives that brought bickering Iraqi parties together to eventually form the government.

Now, of course, comes one of those benchmark moments – we are nearing the end date of the SOFA between Iraq and the U.S. President Obama has called it “turning the page.”

It is a keen observation of this moment as to what is happening in Iraq, as in every story, one must turn the page to continue.

Crucially, however, IT IS vital to remember that turning the page is not the same as writing the next chapter. All of us in the Kurdistan Region know **HOW** we want this story to end.

What concerns us is who the main characters are going to be, what those story elements are and, of course, if the story will unfold to the end in the way we wish.

America must not leave the Middle East. Its troops can be reduced, but it must always be there – in its spirit, in its history of tolerance and democracy, in its support for those oppressed.

It must share its students and teachers, its diplomats, its liberties and love for life, its optimism and its perseverance.

Its words must be smart and strong and its actions must be in concert with those universal goals that all freedom loving people embrace.

It is worth reminding Americans and our friends in the White House and Congress of where we are today.

Today we in the Kurdistan Region are the strongest friend and ally the United States has in our part of the world.

Our home is the place with the most progressive press law in the region, the place with a higher percentage of women in our legislature than most of the nations in the world, the place where Christians and others fleeing religious persecution from elsewhere in Iraq come to find sanctuary and a future.

The Kurdistan region is the place where those seeking to invest – from some of our newest friends like the Koreans to neighbors like Turkey – find our new economy vibrant, promising and full of opportunity.

So again, I am glad you invited me today. We need you – the United States -- to remain interested in Kurdistan and in Iraq. It has been the United States who has led the way in protecting us and believing in us.

The Kurdistan Region is bound to America like few others. Kurdish hopes for autonomy -- after a history of being the victims of ethnic cleansing and mass slaughter -- first became a precarious reality when President George H.W. Bush, Prime Minister Major and French President Mitterrand instituted the northern no-fly zone over Iraq in 1991, three years after Saddam Hussein's Anfal campaign wiped out up to 200,000 Kurds.

With American protection in place, the Kurds began building infrastructure and honing their political vision.

We had our fit and starts, our internal fighting, and our political difficulties. We still have some.

But today, we are a tangible and relative success for the United States.

We are your natural friends and your unshakable allies.

We are deeply grateful for your toil, tears, blood and treasure spent on our behalf.

There are no statues to American liberators in Kurdistan or streets named after your presidents.

Perhaps those will come. What there is today, in the eyes of every Kurd, in the bazaars of our large cities, in the tea shops of our villages and along the trails of our mountain shepherds, are the faces of gratitude for what you did for us.

As the sands shift throughout the Middle East, there is some bedrock for America to place its feet: Iraqi Kurdistan.

Together, we can help build that place where others see democracy can work and they can emulate in the ways best suited for their nations at this moment.

Our story from the Kurdistan Region has been uplifting. We understand that greater political, democratic and economic reforms are necessary, and we are working on them, but we are on a right path.

We are working with PriceWaterHouse Coopers to implement a good governance and transparency initiative that roots out corruption and improves our standard of governance.

We are working with RAND Corporation to implement a civil servant reform process, aimed at downsizing our over-bloated government and strengthening the private sector.

We are investing in our future by launching the ambitious Human Capacity Building Development Program where our government has

appropriated \$100M for students to study abroad for Masters degrees and doctorates

We are positioning our Region as a major potential energy source for Iraq, and possibly Europe.

With our abundant natural Gas, we aim to add to the 1700MW of electricity we currently produce in Kurdistan another 5000MW.

Enough to power other key cities in Iraq beyond Kurdistan. Our aim is to be a principle supplier of gas to the Nabucco pipeline project; which will strategically supply Europe with alternative sources of energy.

We are finally beginning to realize our potential, as a major political and economic power within Iraq, but more importantly beyond Iraq's boundaries.

The U.S. military is leaving, but the stability that will define the U.S. success in Iraq cannot and must not leave.

That is why we were thrilled when U.S. officials announced they plan to open a diplomatic consulate in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region, and in Basra.

We see this decision as one in a series of steps by the United States to honor the pledges of President Obama and others for renewed and continued support to the Kurdistan Region as part of its desire to ensure that stability stays in Iraq.

There remain tough internal issues that we Iraqis must work out – revenue sharing and hydrocarbons law, and resolving the status of the

disputed territories as well as implementing federalism per the constitution of Iraq.

Solving these issues is a great priority to our friends in the United States. But solving these issues is even a greater priority to us.

Congress and the Obama administration should reflect on just how important this is for all of Iraq and the region and avoid actions – intentional or otherwise – that would impede or diminish this laudable progress.

We must work to build democratic institutions throughout Iraq, and set the tone, example and challenge for our brothers and sisters who have

not yet been able to take those first steps. This is indeed a goal that deserves all of our hearts and souls.

The esteemed American journalist, Bill Moyers, wrote in 2007, that “Democracy works when people claim it as their own.” We in Kurdistan have staked our claim. But stakes remain high this year.

With American guidance and support, Iraq can show how those in a democracy can overcome entrenched political differences and move forward to the next level of democratic rule. In doing so, we honor what the United States gave us and show our neighbors that indeed, there is a better way.

Thank you very much.

June 1, 2011

Protests in Kurdistan

To the Editor:

We object to the way "Anger Lingers in Iraqi Kurdistan After a Crackdown" (news article, May 19) represented the response of the government's security services to the protests.

The Kurdistan Regional Government was elected in 2009 with 60 percent of the votes cast. It should not be compared to the undemocratic governments of Egypt and Tunisia.

The violence was a result of political opportunists attempting to achieve with force what they were unable to achieve at the ballot box. In response, the security services showed enormous restraint in the face of more than three months of provocation. It is regrettable that there was any violence and that there were casualties among both protesters and security forces.

There are legitimate grievances about government performance that are being addressed. The president has announced a reform program, and we are prepared to hold early elections. The government has also been helped by professional experts such as PricewaterhouseCoopers and RAND Corporation to bring performance, transparency and accountability to higher standards.

Violent calls to dissolve a democratically elected government are irresponsible, and ceding to this demand would set a dangerous precedent for the Kurdistan region's emerging democracy.

QUBAD TALABANI

Kurdistan Regional Government

Representative to the United States

Washington, May 25, 2011



TS NAVIGATIONS LLC

TS Navigations LLC

#5943

Supplemental Filing, January to June 2011.

In addition to the attached materials, other services to the client included:

Organizing speeches to World Affairs Councils in Manchester, N.H.; Burlington, Vt., Portland, Me.; Florida Palm Beaches; Sioux Falls, S.D., and Cincinnati, Ohio. Those sponsors undertook to arrange media interviews with the client, to which TS Navigations LLC provided materials. (Some of the events were later postponed). Material written for some of those events was then used by client for remarks at other venues.

Media alerts and invitations released in advance of a client reception in the U.S. Capitol in honor of the region's Newroz celebrations in March.

Participated in the media strategy and editing for the soon-to-be-released 2011 investment guide (cover attached to filing).

Wrote for the client a letter to the editor of the New York Times newspaper and facilitated publication (copy attached).

Tom Squitieri

TS Navigations LLC